

A Trek Through Jeremiah 21 - 11:18 - 12:17

Bruce Pike

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Today: Jeremiah and the covenant (part 2) 11:1 - 12:17

- How Jeremiah himself was rejected by the people of Judah
- How he complained to Yahweh
- How Yahweh replied

Six truths about rejection, complaining, correction, promises.

Rejection of the messenger 11:18-23

- Context is Jeremiah's preaching in support of Josiah's reform
 - He was commanded to preach 11:1-8
 - His message was rejected 11:9-17
 - He himself was rejected 11:18-23.

The plot 11:18-19, 21

Jeremiah 11:18–19, 21 (LSB)

18Moreover, Yahweh made it known to me, and I knew it; Then You showed me their deeds.

19But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; And I did not know that they had devised thoughts against me, saying, “Let us make the tree with its fruit a ruin, And let us cut him off from the land of the living, That his name be remembered no more.”

...

21Therefore thus says Yahweh concerning the men of Anathoth, who seek your life, saying, “Do not prophesy in the name of Yahweh, so that you will not die at our hand”;

- Example of how Jeremiah himself was rejected for his preaching.
- Moreover, Yahweh made it known to me, and I knew it.
 - At his calling Yahweh told him there would be opposition
 - 1:18-19 “Now behold, I have given you today as a fortified city and as a pillar of iron and as walls of bronze against the whole land, to the kings of Judah, to its princes, to its priests, and to the people of the land. “And they will fight against you, but they will not overcome you, for I am with you to deliver you,” declares Yahweh.
- Then You showed me their deeds.
 - Now Yahweh has revealed a plot against his life by the men of Anathoth
 - Anathoth was Jeremiah’s hometown, a village of priests descended from Abiathar who was exiled to Anathoth by King Solomon. Zadok replaced him as high priest in Jerusalem.
 - They were angry because
 - Josiah centralized worship in Jerusalem. They would need to serve in Jerusalem with the descendants of Zadok.
 - Jeremiah called their present worship hypocritical.
- But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; And I did not know that they had devised thoughts against me
 - Illustration from slaughtering animals
 - When Jeremiah preached he expected opposition but did not know people would try to kill him
- saying,
 - Yahweh reveals the very words of the plotters
 - V19 “Let us make the tree with its fruit a ruin, And let us cut him off from the land of the living, That his name be remembered no more.”
 - V21 “Do not prophesy in the name of Yahweh, so that you will not die at our hand”
 - They did not like it that Jeremiah preached with the authority of Yahweh against their ministry.
 - If he continued to preach they intended to kill him, to ruin his ministry, to remove his memory (Jeremiah was unmarried and had no children to carry on his name (16:2))
 - Irony: they would be ruined (5:10)

Jeremiah's plea 11:20

Jeremiah 11:20 (LSB)

20But, O Yahweh of hosts, who judges righteously, Who tests the insides and the heart, Let me see Your vengeance on them, For to You have I revealed my case.

- Jeremiah appeals to the righteous Judge.
- He is innocent. He has done what he was commanded to do.
- He brings a legal case against the men of Anathoth for impeding Yahweh's work.
- He asks Yahweh to act against them.

Yahweh's verdict 11:22-23

Jeremiah 11:22–23 (LSB)

22therefore thus says Yahweh of hosts, “Behold, I am about to punish them! The choice men will die by the sword; their sons and daughters will die by famine;

23and a remnant will not be left to them, for I will bring calamity on the men of Anathoth—the year of their punishment.”

- Men of Anathoth are declared guilty
- Punishment is death with no remnant. Year of their punishment is the Babylon conquest. Witnessed by Jeremiah.
- Only the ones who sought Jeremiah's death. 128 men of Anathoth returned from the exile (Neh 7:27)

Truth 1: Rejection. When we bring the gospel to unbelievers we can expect rejection of the message and rejection of us.

Jeremiah's complaint 12:1-4

Jeremiah 12:1–4 (LSB)

1Righteous are You, O Yahweh, when I would plead my case with You; Indeed I would speak matters of justice with You: Why has the way of the wicked succeeded? Why are all those who deal in treachery complacent?

2You have planted them; they have also taken root; They grow; they have even produced fruit. You are near to their lips But far from their inmost being.

3But You, O Yahweh, You know me; You see me; And You test my heart's attitude toward You. Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter And set them apart for a day of carnage!

4How long is the land to mourn And the plants of every field to dry up? Because of the evil of those who inhabit it, Animals and birds have been swept away, Because men have said, "He will not see our latter ending."

- V1a Right start
 - Righteous are You, O Yahweh, when I would plead my case with You
 - Repeating 11:20. Jeremiah starts by acknowledging that Yahweh is righteous.
 - He brings his complaint as one who is troubled but teachable.
 - Indeed I would speak matters of justice with You
 - Appealing to Yahweh as the just Judge. As Abraham about Sodom (Gen 18:25).
- V1b-2 Jeremiah's case
 - Why has the way of the wicked succeeded? Why are all those who deal in treachery complacent?
 - Why are the wicked prospering?
 - Common OT question. Ps 94:3 How long shall the wicked, O Yahweh, How long shall the wicked exult?
 - You have planted them; they have also taken root; They grow; they have even produced fruit.
 - Planted by Yahweh in the promised land
 - Provided for
 - Growing and producing fruit even though they have rejected the covenant and gone after other gods.
 - You are near to their lips But far from their inmost being.
 - Hypocrites. Professing Yahweh but worshipping other gods.
- V3a Jeremiah's integrity
 - But You, O Yahweh, You know me; You see me; And You test my heart's attitude toward You.
 - Yahweh knows Jeremiah: he has done what he was commanded to do and his plea is for justice.

- V3b Plea for judgment
 - Drag them off like sheep for the slaughter And set them apart for a day of carnage!
 - As Jeremiah had been made a lamb going to the slaughter.
- V4 Jeremiah's concerns
 - How long is the land to mourn And the plants of every field to dry up? Because of the evil of those who inhabit it, Animals and birds have been swept away, Because men have said, "He will not see our latter ending."
 - The land is suffering because of the evil of its people
 - Men have mocked Jeremiah and his predictions of coming calamity.

Truth 2: Complaints. Our Lord is open to complaints from His people who are troubled as long as they acknowledge that He is righteous and they are teachable.

Yahweh's reply 12:5-17

- Yahweh knows Jeremiah.
- He knows that Jeremiah is fainting because he is losing focus:
 - He wants justice but also personal vengeance.
 - 11:20 Let me see Your vengeance on them
 - He is exaggerating the bad.
 - 12:1 Why are all those who deal in treachery complacent?
 - He is focusing on his personal affliction
 - 12:4 Because men have said, "He will not see our latter ending."
- He does not dismiss Jeremiah but replies with correction, instruction, hope.

A bracing reply 12:5-6

Jeremiah 12:5–6 (LSB)

5“If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, Then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?

6“For even your brothers and the household of your father, Even they have dealt treacherously with you, Even they have called aloud after you. Do not believe them, although they may say nice things to you.”

- Yahweh corrects Jeremiah's self-pity.
- V5 Gird up your loins
 - Two illustrations. His situation is going to get much worse.
 - Jeremiah is fainting marching with foot soldiers but he is going to need to keep up with cavalry.
 - Jeremiah is fainting traveling on level ground with no hazards. He is going to be traveling through the thicket of the Jordan: floodplain covered in thick vegetation, flooded part of the year, with lions.
- V6 Face the facts
 - Jeremiah is commanded to go and to speak.
 - He will encounter opposition
 - His own family have been treacherous with him and have hounded him like a fugitive.
- Jeremiah accepted Yahweh's correction and persevered through forty years of difficult ministry.

Truth 3: Correction. Our Lord knows best. Sometimes we need his correction.

A larger context 12:7-13

Jeremiah 12:7–13 (LSB)

7“I have forsaken My house; I have abandoned My inheritance; I have given the beloved of My soul Into the hand of her enemies.

8“My inheritance has become to Me Like a lion in the forest; She has given forth its voice against Me; Therefore I have come to hate her.

9“Is My inheritance like a speckled bird of prey to Me? Are the birds of prey against her on every side? Go, gather all the beasts of the field, Bring them to devour!

10“Many shepherds have ruined My vineyard; They have trampled down My portion; They have made My desired portion A desolate wilderness.

11“It has been made a desolation; Desolate, it mourns before Me; The whole land has been made desolate Because no man sets it upon his heart.

12“On all the bare heights in the wilderness Destroyers have come, For a sword of Yahweh is devouring From one end of the land even to the other; There is no peace for any flesh.

13“They have sown wheat and have reaped thorns; They have strained themselves to no profit. But be ashamed of your produce Because of the burning anger of Yahweh.”

- Yahweh instructs Jeremiah in the larger context: Jeremiah's tragedy is a miniature of Yahweh's tragedy.
- Yahweh's grief
 - Yahweh was grieved that His people had rejected Him and chosen idols.
 - He is personally affected. Personal pronouns (My, Me) in v 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.
 - Because of what has become of the beloved of His soul (v7)
 - He grieves
 - Is 1:2 Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; For Yahweh speaks, “Sons I have reared and raised up, But they have transgressed against Me.
 - Hos 2:5 “For their mother has played the harlot; She who conceived them has acted shamefully. For she said, ‘I will go after my lovers...’
 - Like Jeremiah's rejection by his family and village.

- Yahweh's faithfulness
 - Yahweh is faithful towards His people. He now had no choice but judgment
 - His people have become vicious towards Him (v8)
 - None of them take to heart the covenant (v11)
 - They will be disciplined
 - Given into the hand of their enemies (v7)
 - Made like a prey to be attacked and devoured (v9)
 - Made a desolation by shepherds (leaders of invading armies) who are the sword of Yahweh (v10-12)
 - They will be shamed (v13)
 - Farming interrupted by the invasion.
 - No benefit for their labors
 - Shamed because they knew the covenant but chose to reject it.
 - But His intent is not destruction but demolition to rebuild
 - 1:10 "See, I have appointed you this day over the nations and over the kingdoms, To uproot and to tear down, To cause to perish and to pull down, To build and to plant."

Truth 4: Grief. Our Lord grieves when we go wrong.

Truth 5: Faithfulness. Our Lord is faithful to discipline us when we need it.

A surprising prospect 12:14-17

Jeremiah 12:14–17 (LSB)

14Thus says Yahweh concerning all My evil neighbors who beat at the inheritance with which I have caused My people Israel to inherit, “Behold, I am about to uproot them from their land and will uproot the house of Judah from among them.

15“And it will come about that after I have uprooted them, I will return and have compassion on them; and I will cause them to return, each one to his inheritance and each one to his land.

16“Then if they will really learn the ways of My people, to swear by My name, ‘As Yahweh lives,’ even as they taught My people to swear by Baal, they will be built up in the midst of My people.

17“But if they will not listen, then I will uproot that nation, uproot and make it perish,” declares Yahweh.

- Yahweh gives hope with a promise for the future.
- V14 Promise of judgment
 - Yahweh identifies with His people.
 - Surrounding nations who attacked His people are guilty and deserve punishment.
 - They along with Judah will be uprooted by Babylon.
- V15 Promise of restoration
 - Yahweh will have compassion on the nations and restore them.
- V16-17 Condition of restoration
 - If the nations learn to truly worship Yahweh they will be built up in the midst of Yahweh’s people. Judah’s restoration implied.
 - If they will not learn to truly worship Yahweh they will perish
 - Gal 3:27-29 For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.

Truth 6: Promise. God promises that all who trust in Christ will be built up and those who do not trust in Christ will perish.

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Truth 2: Complaints. Our Lord is open to complaints from His people who are troubled as long as they acknowledge that He is righteous and they are teachable.

Truth 3: Correction. Our Lord knows best. Sometimes we need his correction.

Truth 4: Grief. Our Lord grieves when we go wrong.

Truth 5: Faithfulness. Our Lord is faithful to discipline us when we need it.

Truth 6: Promise. God promises that all who trust in Christ will be built up and those who do not trust in Christ will perish.

Application: Running with horses

Jer 12:5 "If you have run with footmen and they have tired you out, Then how can you compete with horses? If you fall down in a land of peace, How will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?

- Jeremiah was fainting. He asked, "Why has the way of the wicked succeed?" (12:1)
- Yahweh challenges him to gird up his loins and face the facts: If he thinks he is faint now greater challenges are coming. Even his own family will deal treacherously with him (12:6).
- The challenge was successful; Jeremiah remained faithful to the end.

We are in the same situation.

Our Lord is "holy, holy, holy" (Is 6:3). His will is good and pleasing and perfect (Ro 12:2).

He made us and knows us and all of our days. (Ps 139).

He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able (1 Cor 10:13).

He disciplines us to share His holiness (Heb 12:10)

Sometimes we faint (Heb 12:3)

Some tips

- Heb 12:1-3
 - V3 Fainting
 - Remedy:
 - V1 Get rid of weight and sin.
 - V1 Run with endurance the race set before us
 - V2 Fix our eyes on Jesus
- Ps 103
 - V4 Soul in the pit.
 - Remedy:
 - v1 Bless Yahweh, O my soul.
- Ps 43:3-5
 - V5 Soul in despair.
 - Remedy:
 - V3 Cry for God's light and truth to bring one to His holy mountain.
 - V5 Wait for God for I shall still praise Him

References

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